

State Vocational Federation of Teachers

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Raised Bill No. 229: An Act Concerning Sudden Cardiac Arrest Prevention
Committee on Children
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I am speaking to you today not only as an OSHA-certified CPR trainer and as a person who has coached CIAC sports for several years, but as someone who represents teachers and coached throughout the Connecticut Technical High School System. I have significant concerns about Raised Bill #229: AN ACT CONCERNING SUDDEN CARDIAC ARREST PREVENTION. The bill as currently proposed increases the liability and responsibility of coaches without increasing the safety of student-athletes. It would require duplication of information provided in current training. Most importantly, the bill as proposed shifts the responsibility for notifying parents and addressing medical concerns from the district to the coach.

The current coaching law requires all coaches to maintain current first aid and cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR). In addition to cardio-pulmonary resuscitation and rescue breathing, CPR courses include signs, symptoms and prevention of heart attacks, causes of heart disease, breathing emergencies such as choking and the proper method for obtaining medical treatment for a student in distress. Many courses now include training in the use of an AED machine. Additionally, non-teacher coaches by statute must take a 45 clock hour course which includes 15 hours of instruction on the medical aspects of interscholastic coaching. During those 15 hours, the course covers sudden cardiac arrest in great detail. Currently, the First Aid/CPR/AED certificate is good for two years; the training must be completed again before the certificate is reissued. Raised Bill #229 requires an annual review, with a full "refresher course" required every five years. The logistics of these requirements – different classes, different timelines – will create confusion for coaches without improving the safety of student-athletes. It is challenging enough now to attract coaches to some of our athletic programs; it is difficult to see how this bill would improve that situation.

As importantly, Raised Bill #229 moves the responsibility for student safety from the district to the coach. Under this bill, it is the responsibility of the coach to "provide each student's parent or legal guardian with a copy of the informed consent form." It is the coach who is responsible of ensuring "the proper method of allowing a student who has experienced a sudden cardiac event to return to intramural or interscholastic athletics." Under Subsection 4, it is the coach who faces penalties if these actions are not undertaken. In many cases, the coach has no ability to guarantee that the district is compliant. This bill creates the illusion of student-athlete safety by

giving responsibility to the coach, while in fact the ability to notify and comply with the spirit of the law lies with the district.

The vast majority of districts and coaches make student-athlete their primary concern. This bill would not improve that situation. Rather, it would shift responsibility for the non-compliant few from the district to the coach. It would create more obstacles for all coaches and all districts, while allowing the few districts who are noncompliant to scapegoat the coach for its own failings. I therefore must respectfully recommend the rejection of Raised Bill #229.